



THE PREMIER'S COUNCIL  
ON THE STATUS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Alberta

# The STATUS REPORT

MAY - 1 1989

March 1989

GARY MCPHERSON  
ERIC BOYD  
RICK HANSEN

CHAIRMAN  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
HONOURARY CHAIRMAN

## MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

During the election campaign there was some concern expressed by individuals and groups representing disabled Albertans that nothing was being done to address many of the ongoing issues preventing disabled Albertans from equal participation in this province. Most of these concerns are valid, an expression of the frustrations people are experiencing after pressing for changes or improvements for years without success.

Relative to these concerns, and in an effort to share with you the perspective of the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities, I make the following comments.

In 1987, during the Steering Committee's consultation, there was unanimous support for the establishment of a Premier's Council of the Status of Persons with Disabilities. The arguments supporting its establishment were:

- Consumers were not being consulted on policies which affect their lives;
- Programs and services were fragmented and uncoordinated, and philosophies driving the policies were inconsistent;
- Lack of awareness about potential of disabled persons;
- Need for more information about programs and services.

## INSIDE "STATUS REPORT"

Council's Mission and Principles.....Page 4

Long Term Care Study.....Page 7

Questionnaire Results.....Page 5

Community Facility.....Page 8  
Enhancement Program

Long Term Care Consultation.....Page 6

Education Response Line.....Page 8

- Participation in Alberta Mortgage and Housing proposal to modify the Housing Adaptation Program to increase the grant and broaden the eligibility criteria.

- Discussion with the Departments of Social Services and Health to identify a strategy to address gaps and potential short term improvements to a number of programs, including:

Alberta Aids to Daily Living

Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped

Individualized Funding to support individuals in the community

Home Care Program

- Negotiation with Alberta Lotteries to ensure accessibility issues are addressed in their Community Facility Enhancement Program.

While the above list is by no means complete, I do hope it serves to demonstrate that the Council is aware of many of the issues, and is committed to a process which will ensure consumer input into resolution of those issues. I also hope that, from this discussion, it will be apparent that any election promises specifically aimed at people with disabilities would have been premature. Given the process that is already in place, Council is trying to secure long term change, not band-aid solutions.

Myself, Eric Boyd, our Executive Director, and other Members of Council will be more than happy to receive your input, whether in a meeting, a group discussion or written submission.

My sincere hope is that you will support the approach we are taking; if you like it, tell others about it. If you don't, tell us!

*Gary McPherson*

## THE COUNCIL'S MISSION

The Council's draft Mission Statement is as follows:

*"To enhance and promote the quality of life for all Albertans with disabilities."*

This Mission Statement evolved directly from the Premier's Council Act which refers to "the opportunity for full and equal participation of persons with disabilities in the life of the Province" 

## THE COUNCIL'S PRINCIPLES

To focus pursuit of the mission, five principles have been proposed. These principles form the belief system that will guide Council's input into the two key areas of policy review and public education. These principles are interrelated and each must be viewed in the context of the others.

### ***INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY AND PERSONAL CONTROL***

- A system is needed that ensures individuals have the opportunity to make decisions and choices about issues affecting their lives.
- Mechanisms to support and assist individuals to make decisions must exist and should be provided in a way that will maximize freedom of individual choice, without denying the necessity to intervene where those decisions would clearly result in purposeful self-destruction or harm to others.
- Personal and financial supports must be in place for those who need them so that genuine options exist from which to choose.

- Freedom of choice must encompass the concept of “dignity of risk”, meaning that people should also have the opportunity to risk making their own mistakes.
- The basic costs incurred directly as a result of a disability must be substantially reduced or eliminated on a universal basis, without the use of a means or asset test to determine eligibility.

### ***OPPORTUNITY FOR FULL PARTICIPATION IN COMMUNITY LIFE***

- Individuals with disabilities must have a range of options for living and working in the community that provides opportunities to maximize participation in the life of the community of their choice.
- Support systems must be in place to facilitate and promote full participation in society.

### ***PERSONAL CONTRIBUTION AND INHERENT WORTH***

- Persons with disabilities must be recognized for their abilities and expenditure on training and support should be viewed as an investment in people.
- The return on the investment is the economic contribution persons with disabilities will make in terms of taxes and dollars reinvested in the community, as well as in the areas of community service and societal enrichment.
- Public education and policy must address the interrelationships of social, economic, and citizenship issues.

### ***EQUITY OF OPPORTUNITY***

- Barriers to participation in society that are purely a function of disability must be removed in order to create an “equal playing field”.
- Among the barriers are lack of public awareness, lack of flexible and available support services, and financial costs directly related to a disability.

### ***CONSUMERS AS CONSULTANTS***

- Consumers and their families must have input into policies that have potential to impact on the status of disabled persons.
- Consultation with consumers must occur as a matter of course whenever changes are being considered, thereby acknowledging the value of that input and the right of individuals to influence their government. 

## ***QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS***

Five hundred and seventy-seven (577) individuals completed and returned the survey sent out by the Premier’s Council in November/December 1988. In the survey, people were asked to rank issues/actions in their order of importance to help the Council set priorities.

### ***RESPONDENTS***

Survey results were analyzed according to whether the respondent had a disability or not, and for those who reported a disability, by disability type. The breakdown of numbers responding is as follows:

CATEGORY	RESPONDENTS
All: No disabilities	356
All: With disabilities	196
Mental Illness	30
Mental Handicap	12
Learning Disability	4
Deaf/Hearing Impairment	19
Blind/Visual Impairment	12
Physical Disability	119

Readers will observe that these figures include only 500 responses. The remainder were not included for many reasons, the main one being no identification of the individual as disabled or not.

## PRIORITIES

Regardless of whether respondents had a disability or not, the two highest priority activities were:

- Review legislation directly affecting persons with disabilities, and
- Need for coordinated advocacy.

The top ranked topics or issues were:

- Living in the Community,
- Employment, and
- Education.

## TASK TEAM FORMATION

Further analysis identified six issues that are part of "Living in the Community": personal support, financial supports, housing, transportation, accessibility and recreation.

Rather than striking six task teams to examine each of these issues independently, the Council has decided that a single task team will be assembled to develop strategies for change in these areas. An overriding responsibility of this team will be to address the issue of service coordination.

A second task team, focusing on "Working in the Community", will examine the issues in education, training and employment. Work has begun that will identify policies and practices within the province that should be targeted for change in the short, medium and long term, to ensure that disabled Albertans are allowed full and equal participation in community life. 

# CONSULTATION ON REHABILITATION AND LONG TERM CARE

The concerns and recommendations of consumers and private, non-profit and government service providers were given a forum at the one day consultation in Calgary on December 12th, 1988. Sponsored jointly by the Premier's Council and the Premier's Commission on Future Health Care for Albertans, the consultation brought together one hundred and ten individuals who each participated in one of six working groups:

1. Hospital based rehabilitation
2. Facility based long term care
3. Rehabilitation for seniors
4. Rehabilitation and community supports for children
5. Professional rehabilitation resources in the community
6. Ongoing community supports for adults

Each group was asked to study the mission and principles of the Alberta Health Care Commission and ensure that these were reflected in their recommendations. Background information on each topic area served as a starting point for discussion by identifying gaps and inadequacies in the present system.

## ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### *1. Consumer Involvement*

Disabled individuals want to have a say, not only in what services are provided, but also in how they are delivered. This message dominated the consultation and is consistent with the current climate of demands for personal control and responsibility in our lives.

## **2. Individualized Funding**

This was seen as one solution to many of the problems identified surrounding available services, how they are accessed, and by whom. Consumers believe that services would be more responsive to their needs if they had financial responsibility for service acquisition.

## **3. Community Emphasis**

While it was recognized that it is not possible to have all health services available in all communities, it was recommended that services focus on keeping people in their communities as much as possible. This means a greater emphasis on support services and a reduction in hospital and long term care facility admissions.

In addition to these global recommendations, many specific ones were made for policy changes to address the health care needs of children, adults and seniors. The final report has been completed and it remains for the Health Care Commission to determine how the results will be incorporated into their final document on future health care for Albertans. In the interim, the Council is consulting with the Commission on the potential for federal/provincial discussions about individualized funding and universal disability insurance. 

# **A STUDY OF LONG TERM CARE FOR YOUNG PHYSICALLY DISABLED ADULTS**

The Mirosh Report, released in February 1988 and titled "A New Vision for Long Term Care", was limited to an examination of the long term care needs of seniors in Alberta. Community reaction strongly suggested that there might be substantial differences in the needs of young disabled adults despite some obvious similarities. With this in

mind, a proposal was prepared to conduct a study that would focus on young disabled adults. This study began early in March 1989, co-sponsored by the Premier's Council and Alberta Health. Chaired by Cheryl Crocker, a member of the Premier's Council, the Advisory Committee will examine the long term care needs of young disabled adults (18-64 years of age) and the necessary service requirements needed to facilitate independence and productivity in these individuals.

A consultative process is planned in which individual and group interviews will be held by the Advisory Committee, with a team of consultants coordinating the activity and analyzing the results. Interviews will be held in various locations throughout the province.

The desired outcome of this study is the development of a system that can provide an integrated service continuum for all people with disabilities. To this end, analysis will focus on the immediate needs in the long term care system, including community and institutional needs, and on the policy requirements to develop the long term care system for the future. The final report should be ready early in the summer.

## **ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

### **Cheryl Crocker (Chairperson)**

Member  
Premier's Council

### **Vivien Lai**

Director, Long Term Care Institutions  
Alberta Health

### **Elaine MacLeod**

Manager, Rehabilitation Services  
Alberta Health

### **Raylene Manolescu**

Project Supervisor, Community Enrichment Project  
Grant MacEwan Community College

### **Larry Pempeit**

Director of Rehabilitation  
Canadian Paraplegic Association

### **Vacant**

Alberta Hospital Association

### **Eric Boyd (Ex officio)**

Executive Director  
Premier's Council

**Paul Stolee (Ex Officio)**  
Manager, Evaluation, Research  
& Strategic Planning Branch  
Alberta Health

**Greg Latham**  
Sub-consultant

**Jacqueline Holt**  
Consultant  
Humanite Services Planning

**Sylvia Mertz**  
Research Assistant  
Humanite Services Planning



## COMMUNITY FACILITY ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM

Funded through provincial lottery revenues, the Community Facility Enhancement Program is a three-year \$100 million program designed to provide funding for renovation, repair, upgrading, or expansion of community facilities in Alberta. It is intended that this program will accomplish three main objectives:

1. to increase the efficiency of facilities;
2. to update, improve, and modernize facilities;
3. to ensure the development of facilities.

Each of these objectives relates directly to the enhancement of the quality of life for all Albertans; in order for community facilities to benefit all Albertans, accessibility must be ensured. Funding is therefore available through this program to make the modifications which are necessary to create an accessible facility. In addition, the Premier's Council is in the process of negotiating with Alberta Lotteries so that grants provided under the Community Facility Enhancement Program are contingent upon the accessibility or planned accessibility of the facility.

Groups eligible for funding include:

- municipalities and municipal districts;
- Indian bands and Metis settlements;

- community groups who have bylaws which "provide for the provision of family and community leisure services for sports, recreational or cultural purposes".

Funding up to \$30,000 is available for assessment studies and up to \$250,000 is available for renovations and repair.

For more information on the Community Facility Enhancement Program, please call 424-3131 in Edmonton or toll-free 1-800-642-3855.

## RESPONSE LINE PROVIDES ACCESS TO SPECIAL EDUCATION INFORMATION

A new service is available to parents, teachers and others interested in the education of children with special needs. "Response Line Services", a free public information service offered by the Education Response Centre, has two components:

1. a Response Line Operator information and referral service available during regular business hours (8:30am to 4:30pm), and
2. the Automated Message Library providing three minute pre-recorded messages such as contact information on agencies and organizations, workshops, resource material and community development.

Both features are Toll Free/Province Wide. To access the Response Line Operator, in Edmonton call **422-0274**; for all other areas, dial 0 and ask for **Zenith 22262**. To access the Message Library, in Edmonton call **422-0266**; for all other areas, dial 0 and ask for **Zenith 22126**.

Index brochures for the message service and further information on Response Line Services are available by contacting Jean Hennig, Response Line Services Supervisor, at 422-6326 in Edmonton.

# THE PREMIER'S COUNCIL ON THE STATUS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

The seeds of the Premier's Council were planted during Rick Hansen's visit to Alberta in March, 1987. Since that time, the Council's Terms of Reference have been established, the Legislation to establish the Council has been passed, and Council Members have been appointed. Communication with Consumers, Agencies, and Government is crucial at this stage to ensure that all stakeholders are informed about present Council initiatives and ongoing Council directions. If there has been a change in any of the information pertaining to you or your group or if you know of someone who would like to receive "Status Report", please write to us at:

Premier's Council on the Status  
of Persons with Disabilities  
250, 11044 - 82 Avenue  
Edmonton, Alberta  
T6G 0T2  
Phone: 422-1095 (Voice or TDD)  
Toll-free: 1-800-272-8841

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